

# Greenbank Electronics Tel: 051 645 3391

460 New Chester Rd, Rock Ferry, Birkenhead, Merseyside. L42 2AE

Our Ref: INTKENQ/8807

Dear Enquirer

Thank you for your interest in the "Interak" computer.

You might wonder what is the point of building your own computer. In one way of looking at it there is no point at all - it's far simpler just to pop along to your local branch of Dixons or Tandy, push your Access or Visa card over the counter, and they will be delighted to push the latest Taiwanese or Japanese box of tricks over the counter in return.

Similarly there's no point in learning how to cook - you can simply bung a frozen monosodium glutamate in the microwave, count to ten and bingo, a gourmet surprise.

There's no point in learning how to play a musical instrument - just turn the radio on and click, music, no effort.

No point in learning how to type, the secretary is paid to do that, no point in learning how to grease the wheel bearings in your car, they're sealed for life. No point in learning to add up multiply or divide by hand - no need now you've got a digital watch-chronometer-memory bank-calculator on your wrist (provided the batteries aren't flat). No point in learning craftsmanship with wood; the fact that the skills are all but lost just makes your rare antiques all the more valuable as they get rarer and rarer.

In fact there seems to be no point in breathing or even staying alive, certainly no point in doing anything difficult.

But some people think there is a point in learning how to do things for themselves: Somebody had to design the computers for the robots to build in Japan. Somebody had to learn how to cook a meal to sell you in a restaurant. Somebody had to learn how to play an instrument to be recorded for you to listen to on your CD player. Somebody in the world knows how to change the batteries in his digital watch instead of throwing it away and buying another.

I rather think that we here in Britain have let things slide. Once upon a time if we didn't know anything, or couldn't make it better or cheaper than anyone else we were ashamed. Now in the main, we don't care if we have lost the skills - we have become consumers not creators.

In Britain we used to have the finest level of expertise in integrated circuit manufacture. Of course, we didn't want to make mundane little chips for pennies when we could make complex military chips for hundreds of pounds, so we let the Americans take over the market for TTL chips and the like. The Americans were just the same, and they let the Japanese make all the cheap high volume chips. But the Japanese and later on Taiwanese, Malaysians etc, had to learn the skills, and gradually they reached the point where their skills were better than ours. So what? we said, if they're daft enough to make all our dynamic RAMs and so on, and to make them cheaper and better than ours, we'll let them.

Now, there's a world shortage. New "anti-dumping" laws have obliged the Japanese to limit their production and increase their prices to levels where we fat cats in the West can compete. The only trouble is, nobody knows how to make these chips any more - we've lost the skills entirely. We're too busy being "Yuppies", and find we can make more money buying and selling a few shares than actually doing any work that needs any practical skill!

So this is the point in building your own computer: you are learning a practical skill that will put you head and shoulders above those whose only computer skill is that of knowing how to handle an Access card at Dixons.

I am I know preaching to the converted, because the very fact that you answered an advertisement like ours in the type of magazine in which we advertise proves that you are the type of person who needs to know and understand how things work, not just how to buy them, and how to call in the repair man!

Unfortunately, the way the world seems to work at the moment is that it is not the clever and creative people who get rich. If your vacuum cleaner breaks down you will be able to fix it in an afternoon - by which time your Yuppie neighbour will have done enough deals on the Stock Market to buy a hundred vacuum cleaners!

So if you are unemployed, or a student, or in a low paid job, or retired, or suffering from ill health, or if you simply have so many interests that you haven't got a fortune to spend on each, then you are a typical Interak user! (That is not to say you should be put off if you happen to be rich through circumstances beyond your control - we really want to know you!)

I am well aware that a full technical description can be

very boring to read. It is vital you have the technical information to decide whether or not Interak is for you, just as it is vital to have a telephone directory in order to make good use of the telephone; but there are few people who read a telephone directory for pleasure!

I am enclosing copious sheets of information, observations and opinions, on the general subject of Interak. I have tried to make it as interesting and lighthearted as I can, but bear in mind my profession is engineering, not literature. If you want a Jeffrey Archer you must apply somewhere else!

(By the way, just because I have a technical training that does not mean to say that I want to write bad English. If you spot a spelling mistake or misplaced participle, let me know so that I can correct it. I am keen on having things correctly spelled for the same reason that I am keen to have circuits correctly designed - my thinking is that if you can't trust me to look up a doubtful work in a Dictionary, how can you trust me to look up a technical parameter or specification on a data sheet!)

Included in the papers I am sending is a form you can use to request further free information; more detailed data sheets, parts lists and the like. Once you have exhausted the free information you should be in a pretty good position to judge whether or not Interak is for you, and the next phase would be the purchase of a manual and/or circuit board. The prices of manuals are indicated on the form as well.

It is a mission of mine to "demystify" computers and share their secrets with the ordinary intelligent man (or woman) in the street. Obviously if you already have a thorough working knowledge of computers then so much of all this will be seen as the waffle it is, and you should move on rapidly to obtaining our detailed technical data sheets.

Note that professional enquirers should not be put off by the lighthearted tone of the present information; we can be serious too if you require it, and can undertake systems design, software design, consultancy etc. without the comedy.

If there is anything I have omitted to say regarding Interak, then please feel free to write or telephone me (even call in if you want, but it would be as well to make an appointment first).

Yours sincerely

*David M. Parkins*

David M Parkins, B Eng (Hons)  
Partner, Greenbank Electronics